Officers' Mess at former RAF Scampton

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Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Listed Building**

Grade: **II**

List Entry Number: **1486279**

Date first listed: **17-Oct-2023**

List Entry Name: **Officers' Mess at former RAF Scampton**

Statutory Address 1: **Royal Air Force Scampton, Scampton, Lincolnshire, LN1 2ST**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

Understanding list entries

(https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/)

Corrections and minor amendments

(https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/)

Location

Statutory Address: **Royal Air Force Scampton, Scampton, Lincolnshire, LN1 2ST**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: **Lincolnshire**

District: **West Lindsey (District Authority)**

Parish: **Scampton**

National Grid Reference: **SK9692978870**

Summary

Officers' Mess with accommodation wings at RAF Scampton built about 1936 to designs by Archibald Bulloch, extended 1939 and again in 1955 by Orman & Partners.

Reasons for Designation

The former Officers' Mess at RAF Scampton, built around 1936 to designs by Archibald Bulloch, extended 1939 and again 1955, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* for its good quality neo-Georgian composition, with carefully composed elevations and use of materials;
* for the spatial qualities of the interior and the understated refinement of the features which survive.

Historic interest:

* as a good surviving example of its type, encapsulating the aims of the post-1934 Expansion Period in the lead up to World War II;
* for its association with some of the most famous actions of World War II, which captured the country's imagination.

History

RAF Scampton developed originally during the First World War as Brattleby Airfield, opening in 1916 with temporary buildings for aerodrome use. Following the end of the war, the site was cleared and the land returned to agricultural use. After 1935, in response to the threat from Nazi Germany, the site began to be redeveloped in what is known as the 'Expansion Period' with the development of sites across Britain in preparation for war.

Scampton was built from 1935, with four large hangars in a semi-circular arc facing the airfield with buildings behind arranged into distinct areas for technical and domestic functions. RAF Scampton was subsequently in active use throughout the Second World War and became one of the best-known RAF stations over the course of the war. Attacks on German shipping and ports, including minelaying operations and attacks on the Scharnhorst in June/July 1940, were followed in May 1942 by involvement in the first 1,000 bomber raids after the introduction of Lancaster bombers two months earlier. The newly-formed 617 squadron, who arrived here in spring 1943, achieved worldwide fame under the command of Guy Gibson with their raid on the Ruhr dams in May that year. Operation Chastise, better known as the Dambusters' Raid, pioneered the long-distance control by squadron commanders of precision operations. This captured the imagination of the press and public at a critical moment in the war, making national heroes of Guy Gibson and his crews.

After the expansion of the airfield and construction of runways in 1943 and 1944, Scampton continued to play an important role in the Strategic Bomber Offensive and the daylight raids in support of the

Allied offensive in Europe. Scampton's enlargement and remodelling for the V-force bombers and its nuclear weapons (one of 10 Class One V-bomber bases remodelled in the late-1950s) underpinned its continued importance during the Cold War.

The core of parent bomber stations which launched the Strategic Bomber Offensive against Germany were planned from 1923 and then from 1934 as the threat of war increased. A major feature in the Second World War was the construction of airfields with concrete runways for four-engined bombers such as the Lancaster. The heavy bomber was, as Churchill acknowledged, the only means - in the absence of an invasion of northern Europe - to take the war to German soil and divert resources from the Eastern front. After Sir Arthur Harris's appointment as head of the Bomber Command in 1942, and especially after the Casablanca conference of 1943 - which postponed Overlord to the following year - even greater resources were committed by the US and British economies towards the bomber offensive. The bomber offensive was conducted at enormous cost to human life. Sir Arthur Harris's own estimates put Bomber Command's fatalities - out of 125,000 who entered its units during the war - at 50,000. The exact number of German civilian fatalities is not known. The firestorms at Dresden and Hamburg alone accounted for tens of thousands of deaths as a result of single concerted raids.

The Officers' Mess at Scampton is a Type B mess (for medium bomber stations), built from a design produced in 1934 by Air Ministry Architect Archibald Bulloch. It was designed to accommodate 36-45 officers in the mess itself, with 28 in the accommodation wings either side. The central mess block had dining and recreation rooms with a long spine corridor running its full length, with separation from the adjoining wings to minimise damage in the event of bombing. The accommodation wings were extended first in 1939, and again in 1955 when the mess facilities were also extended by Orman & Partners. RAF Scampton was visited in May 1943 by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, on which occasion they ate lunch in the Officers' Mess.

Details

Officers' Mess with accommodation wings at RAF Scampton built about 1936 to designs by Archibald Bulloch, extended 1939 and again in 1955 by Orman & Partners.

MATERIALS: the building is built of brick under tile roofs.

PLAN: the Mess building is roughly H-plan, with a large central block running east-west, and flanking wings running north-south.

EXTERIOR: the Mess is designed in the neo-Georgian style typical of such buildings during the period; its main block faces south and is of 17 bays. The central three bays break forward and contain the main entrance with three doors set in deeply arched surrounds. Windows either side (currently boarded) contain tall timber sashes. The steep roof rises behind the parapet and has three central chimneys.

The flanking accommodation blocks project forward of the line of the central block. Their end elevations have central arched ground floor doors with windows either side and three above. The long elevations are of 29 bays with rows of continuous windows at ground and first floor.

The elevations facing the rear courtyard are similar, though the rear of the central block is irregular with a large block denoting the Officers' dining room, a two storey block with a flat at its upper level, and some single storey extensions.

INTERIOR: the main entrance opens into a central hall which has moulded detailing to the walls dividing them into compartments with arched mouldings above cornice level, which repeat the arches from the three main entrance doors. The hall gives access to a spine corridor which runs the full length of the central block. On the south side of the corridor are large function rooms. That to the east of the central hall has a shallow barrel-vaulted ceiling with a simple moulded cornice and deep skirtings. There is a large fireplace with tiled inset and a bolection moulded surround within a larger timber surround and arched niches flanking to either side.

To the rear of the central corridor is the bar area and Officers' dining room. The original 1930s portion has a sprung timber floor and suspended ceiling. The 1950s extension is larger and has projecting pilasters around the edge of the room, with low wainscotting and simple cornice detail. Beyond the dining room and bar areas are kitchen and service rooms.

The accommodation wings each have a main stair for Officers' use with timber banisters and simply moulded posts. There are also secondary service stairs. Each floor of each wing has a cenral corridor with rows of accommodation rooms down each side. Most rooms retain built-in wardrobes; those in the

1930s portions have loosely Art Deco handles while those in the 1950s extension have mid-century style disc handles. Some rooms retain service bells.

Sources

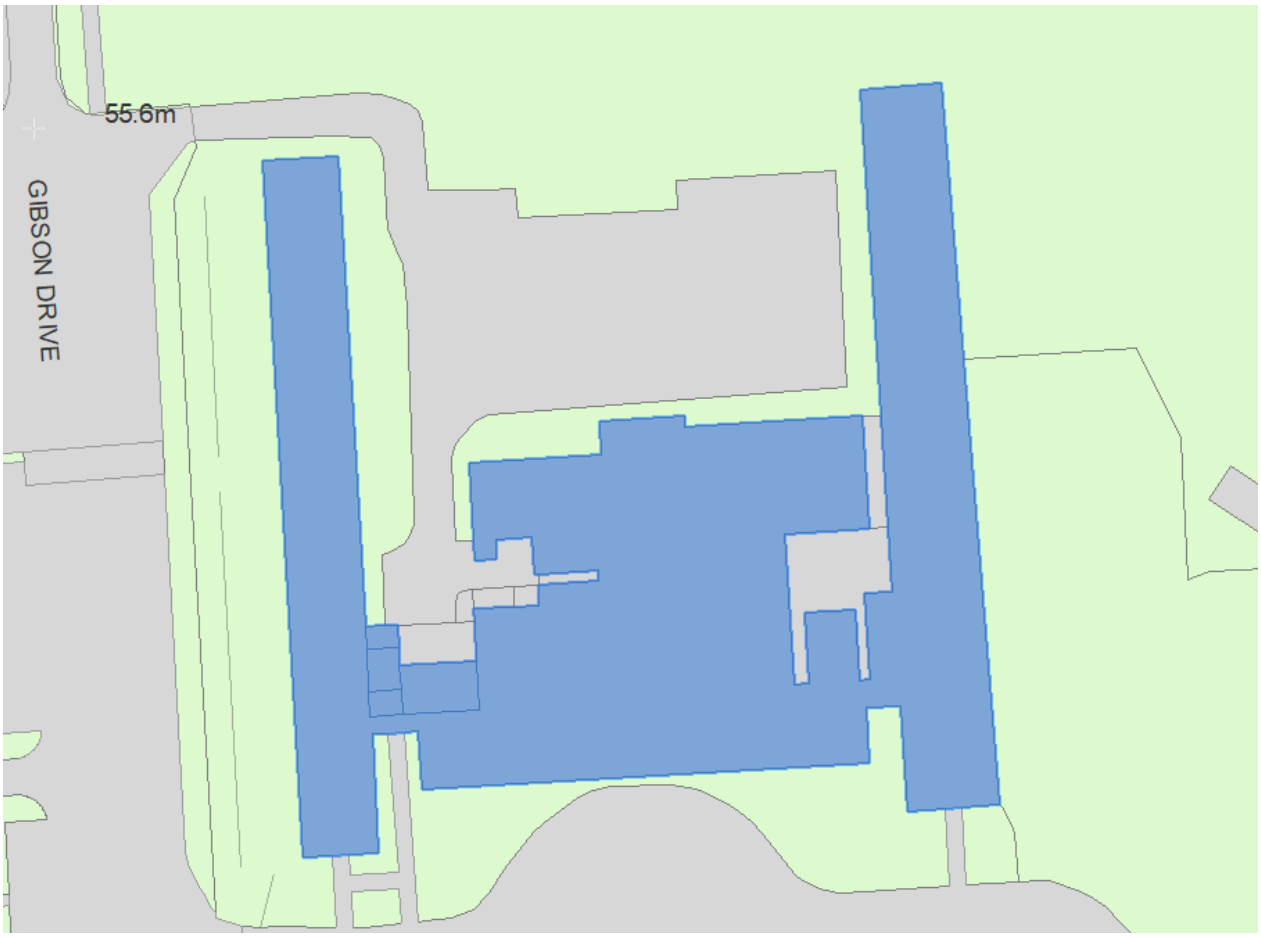
Other

RAF Scampton: An Operational History and Gazetteer of Surviving Structures, Paul Francis, June 2004

RAF Scampton Historic Characterisation, English Heritage/Atkins, October 2004

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



Map

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